

Message Text

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14/20

ACTION EB-07

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 5 LAST 5 LINES OF TEXT)

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EAIR, CA

SUBJECT: QUEBEC REACTION TO AIR CONTROLLERS' CRISIS.

1. QUEBECOIS ARE ANGRY AND DISMAYED BY WHAT IS DESCRIBED WIDELY AS SURRENDER BY GOC TO "BLATANT AND ILLEGAL" AIR CONTROLLER CHALLENGE TO PRINCIPLE OF BILINGUALISM. INITIAL REACTIONS SEEM GOVERNED MORE BY TRIBAL INSTINCTS THAN BY CAREFUL CONSIDERATION. ONE HIGHLY PLACED LIBERAL PARTY SUPPORTER COMMENTED TO US THAT ISSUE IS "MADE TO ORDER FOR SEPERATIST DEMOGOGUES." WELL INFORMED FRANCOPHONE JOURNALIST IN UNCHARACTERISTIC HYPERBOLE, SAID LIBERAL'S MAY HAVE "DEALT THEMSELVES AND CANADA MORTAL BLOW."

2. AS INDICATOR OF POLITICAL IMPORTANCE THIS ISSUE HAS ASSUMED IN QUEBEC, MARC LALONDE, FEDERAL MINISTER OF HEALTH AND WELFARE AND FEDERAL LIBERAL PARTY LEADER IN QUEBEC, FELT CONSTRAINED LAST NIGHT TO DISCARD PREVIOUSLY SCHEDULED TALK ON BUDGET TO DEFEND GOC'S HANDLING OF AIR CONTROLLER ISSUE. SPEAKING TO PARTY FAITHFUL IN LOCAL LIBERAL PARTY CLUB. LALONDE STATED HIS THEME EARLY AND REPEATED IT OFTEN. GOC HAS COMMITTED ITSELF TO BILINGUALISM AND IS NOT GOING BACK ON ITS WORD. HE STRESSED THAT LIBERALS MUST SUCCEED WITHIN MANDATE OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT (I.E. 1974-'78) IN ESTABLISHING BILINGUALISM IRRE-
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VERSABLY- IN THE AIR AND ELSEWHERE. FEDERAL LEADERS ARE NOT NAIVE, HE ADDED. THEY KNOW THAT PROCESS WILL NOT BE EASY. WORST ENEMIES ARE THOSE WHO CLAIM TO AGREE IN PRINCIPLE BUT OPPOSE EVERY STEP TAKEN TO APPLY POLICY. IN MAKING NECESSARY

COMPROMISE TO GET PLANES FLYING, LALONDE ASSERTED, GOC DID NOT BUDGE ON ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE, THE PROGRESSIVE INTRODUCTION OF BILINGUAL CONTROL IN QUEBEC AIRSPACE.

3. ON THIS ISSUE, GOC IS NATURAL ALLY OF GENS DE L'AIR (QUEBEC'S PILOTS, CONTROLLERS, ETC.) AND AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT BEFORE THE 3-MAN COMMISSION OF INQUIRY. LALONDE STRESSED THAT GOC WILL DO ALL POSSIBLE TO CONVINCE COMMISSION THAT BILINGUAL VISUAL FLIGHT CONTROL IS SAFE AT REMAINING 3 OF 10 QUEBEC AIRPORTS AS MOT HAS DETERMINED AND WORK TO DEVELOP PROOF THAT BILINGUAL INSTRUMENT FLIGHT CONTROL IS ALSO SAFE. TO THIS END, HE SAID THAT IT WOULD BE REGRETTABLE IF FRANCOPHONE FLIGHT CONTROLLERS AND PILOTS BOYCOTTED HEARINGS AND LEFT GOC ALONE TO DEFEND BILINGUALISM (THE QUEBEC WING OF THE CANADIAN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS HAD THREATENED TO SHUN HEARINGS OF SPECIAL THREE MAN COMMISSION AND THEIR LEADER ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD SEEK TO DECERTIFY HIS ORGANIZATION FROM THE NATIONAL UNION.) LALONDE STATED HE IS SURE THAT THE SAFETY ISSUE WILL PROVE NON-EXISTENT. HE DENOUNCED IT AS A FALSE ISSUE COVERING POLITICAL MOTIVES AND CONCLUDED THAT THE EDITORIALS WRITTEN IN "ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS" IN LAST 72 HOURS DEMONSTRATE THAT COUNTRY IS BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND THIS FACT.

4. ELSEWHERE IN QUEBEC CITY LAST NIGHT PQ LEADERS RENE LEVESQUE, CLAUDE MORIN, AND MARCEL LEGER MET PRESS TO DENOUNCE FEDERAL LIBERALS WHO DARED TO QUALIFY "ODIOUS SURRENDER OF GOC BEFORE ANGLOPHONE PILOTS AND CONTROLLERS AS VICTORY OF BILINGUALISM". LEVESQUE SAID THAT NOT EVEN A PQ GOVT. COULD RESOLVE PROBLEM WITHIN CURRENT PROVINCIAL/FEDERAL SET-UP, TYUS ISSUE SHOWS ONE MORE TIME THAT QUEBEC MUST BECOME INDEPENDENT TO PUT AN END TO "FARCE WHICH HAS LASTED 109 YEARS". NOTING THAT TRUDEAU COMPARED CURRENT "CRISIS" TO 1942 CONSCRIPTION CRISIS, LEVESQUE REMARKED THAT ENGLISH-CANADIANS WON BOTH AS THEY WILL ASLL CRISES WHERE THEY FEEL NEED TO PUT DOMESTIC COLONY - QUEBEC - IN ITS PLACE.

5. COMMENT: LALONDE WAS OBVIOUSLY UNDER GREAT PRESSURE FROM LOCAL PARTY FAITHFUL TO PROVIDE CONVINCING JUSTIFICATION FOR GOC ACTION. HIS PASSIONATE REAFFIRMATION OF TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED DEDICATION TO BILINGUALISM MAY HAVE REASSURED UNCLASSIFIED

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SOME PARTY MILITANTS. HOWEVER, OUR OBSERVATION WAS THAT GENERAL REACTION OF EVEN THIS SELECT AUDIENCE WAS PENSIVE AND UNENTHUSIASTIC. VIRTUALLY ALL POLITICALLY AWARE QUEBECOIS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED SITUATION VIEW THIS ISSUE AS A CHALLENGE TO BILINGUALISM AND TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT. EVEN MANY COMMITTED LIBERAL PARTY FEDERALISTS ARE DISPLEASED WITH WHAT IS WIDELY VIEWED AS A BREACH OF THE BILINGUAL COMMITMENT. REGARDLESS OF TECHNICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE CONCESSIONS MADE TO THE PILOTS AND CONTROLLERS, QUEBECOIS PERCEIVE THE ISSUE AS A POLITICAL CHALLENGE WHICH DEMANDS GROUP SOLIDARITY. THE PM HIMSELF, ACCORDING TO SOME OBSERVERS, ENCOURAGED THIS VIEW OF GROUP CONFRONTATION BY DESCRIBING THE ISSUE AS GRAVEST "CRISIS" IN INTERCOMMUNAL

RELATIONSHIPS SINCE 1942.

MCNAMARA

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